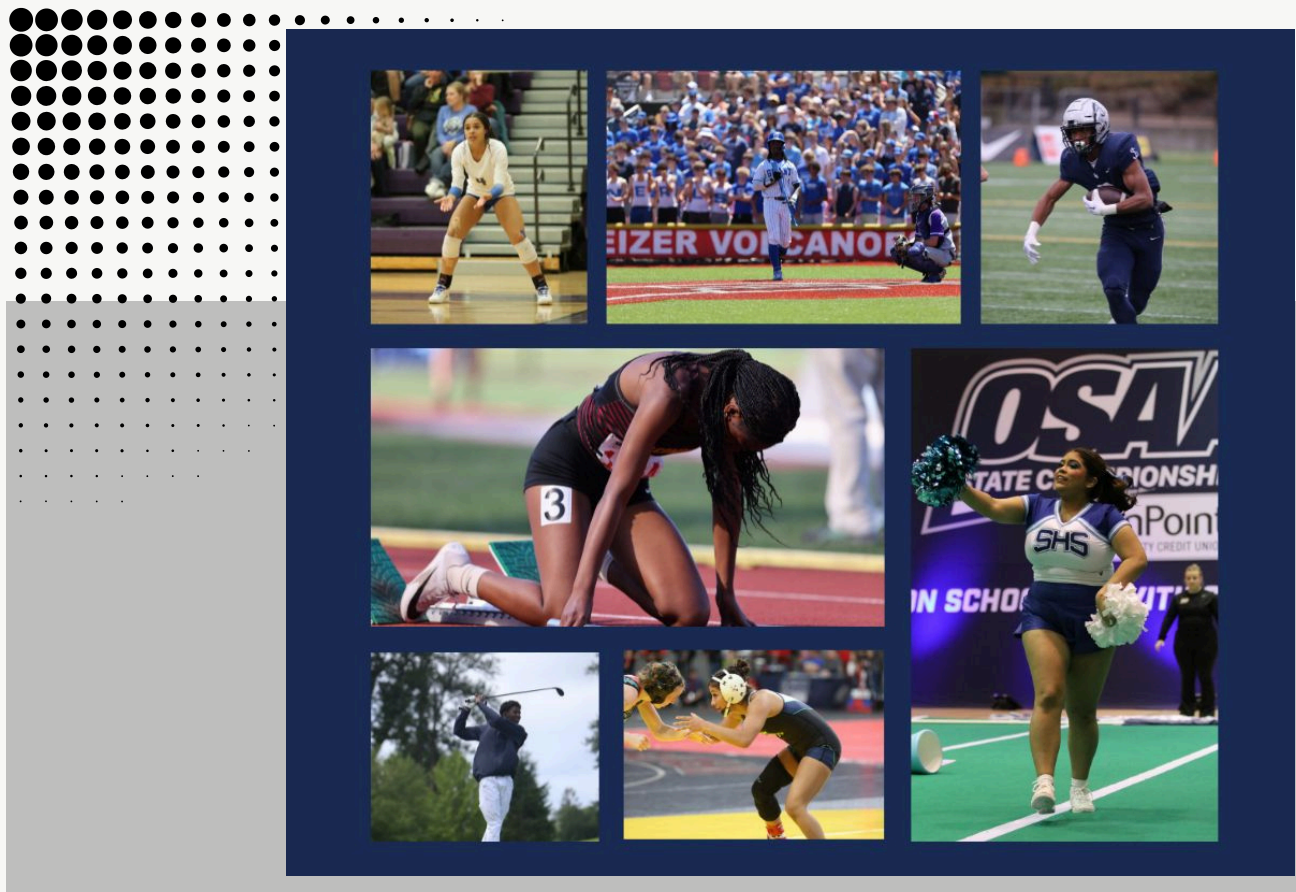


When Bias Incidents Occur in School Sports and Activities: Preventing, Responding, and Restoring

A Resource Guide for School Administrators, Athletic Directors, and Coaches





Welcome Message

The OSAA and COSA believe that meeting the needs of all students, both inside and outside of competition, begins with strong leadership from coaches and administrators. Each has the responsibility of creating and maintaining a safe environment where every student can thrive. In athletics and activities, this includes providing equitable participation opportunities, positive recognition, and learning experiences to students while enhancing the achievement of educational goals.

OSAA and COSA created this guide to support schools with readiness to prevent and address incidents of bias and restore when an incident of bias has occurred. This guide is not to replace legal advice. Districts should consult with their legal counsel as needed.

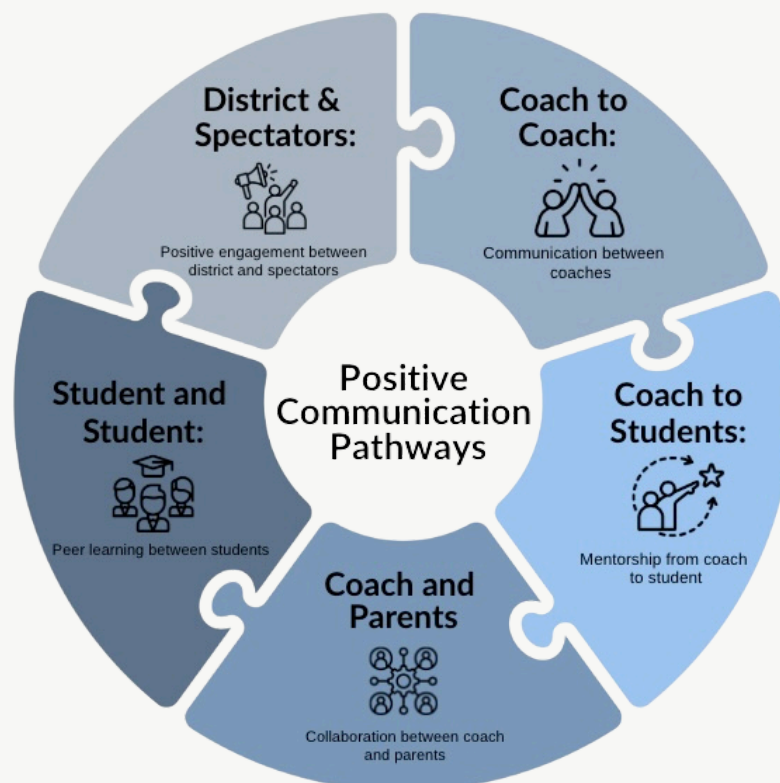
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Prevent, Respond, Restore: Readiness and Response Framework

Creating and maintaining safe spaces for students in athletics and activities is critical for students to thrive. The Prevent, Respond, Restore framework is a resource for school leaders, athletic directors, and coaches and provides schools with tools to proactively prevent and respond to incidents of bias that occur in athletics and activities. This framework is rooted in four principles that are key to positive experiences for all students in athletics and activities.

1. **Safety and well-being** expectations and supports are in place. The safety and well-being of students are the responsibility of school administrators, athletic directors, coaches, players, and spectators. School administrators and athletic directors set the tone and communicate the expectations of conduct and sportsmanship for all in the athletic and activities school community.
2. **Equity and cultural responsiveness** are centered on the student experience. School administrators, athletic directors, and coaches know their students and understand the cultural context of the school community. The students' home cultures are seen as assets, and the school activity works to establish and maintain positive relationships with families and the community.
3. **Ongoing leadership development** is in place. Districts adhere to equitable and ethical hiring and evaluation practices for all coaches. Districts communicate and adhere to equitable and ethical response standards (and discipline if needed) to incidents of conflict or violation of policies and laws governing athletics and activities. Athletic Directors and coaches complete mandatory training requirements prior to assuming any coaching duties.
4. **A culture of collaboration** is expected. Schools cultivate positive communication pathways and parameters to share information, solve problems, and share the responsibility of improving the experience for all student participants.



What is a Bias Incident?

According to the Oregon Department of Education's updated Every Student Belongs Guidance, "Bias incident" means a person's hostile expression of animus toward another person, relating to the other person's perceived race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or national origin, of which criminal investigation or prosecution is impossible or inappropriate. Bias incidents may include derogatory language or behavior directed at or about any of the preceding demographic groups. This applies to in-person, hybrid, or distance learning environments.

"Symbol of hate" means nooses, symbols of neo-Nazi ideology, or the battle flag of the Confederacy. For the purpose of this guidance, it also includes any symbol, image, or object that expresses animus on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or national origin, whose display:

1. Is reasonably likely to cause a substantial disruption of or material interference with school activities; or
2. Is reasonably likely to interfere with the rights of students by denying them full access to the services, activities, and opportunities offered by a school.

Each school district has adopted a policy regarding bias incidents. It is important for each school district to know their policy and how it applies to athletics and activities.



Prevent: It starts with a culture of care & respect

Establish, foster, and maintain a climate of safety and respect

One of the most effective ways to prevent bias incidents in school athletics and activities is by fostering a culture of safety and respect. This begins with clearly communicating expectations, protective policies, reporting procedures, and support resources to all participants, including players, coaches, staff, and officials, before the season starts.

Checklist: Building a Culture of Respect in School Athletics & Activities



1. Establish Clear Expectations and Policies that Prioritize Equity and Non-Discrimination

- Define and document expectations for respectful behavior for players, coaches, staff, and spectators.
- Communicate expectations before the season starts.
- Ensure policies include:
 - Anti-bias and anti-discrimination guidelines
 - Reporting procedures for bias incidents (Bias Incident Reporting and Formal Complaint Policies)
 - Consequences for violations aligned with the district's code of conduct and policies
 - Support resources for affected individuals



2. Communicate Proactively and Inclusively

- Share expectations and policies with students and families in their preferred language.
- Post expectations clearly at all events (e.g., signage at games, printed programs).
- Use multiple channels: emails, newsletters, school websites, and social media.



3. Foster Relationships and Trust

- Encourage regular, positive interactions between:
 - Staff and students
 - Staff and families
- Provide training for coaches and staff on anti-bias, cultural competency, and relationship-building.
- Host community-building events to strengthen school-family connections.



4. Assess and Improve School Climate

- Conduct climate surveys for students, staff, and families.
- Organize student focus groups to gather honest feedback.
- Create feedback loops to act on insights and improve practices.



5. Provide Access to Support and Resources

- Make support services (e.g., counseling, conflict resolution) readily accessible.
- Train staff and students on how to report incidents safely and confidentially.
- Designate trusted adults or liaisons for students to approach with concerns.



6. Monitor and Reflect

- Regularly review incident reports and feedback data.
- Adjust policies and practices based on findings.
- Celebrate progress and recognize positive behavior publicly.

Respond: Take timely action with care and clear and equitable practices

Treat incidents seriously and take immediate action

To respond effectively to bias incidents in school athletics and activities, schools should act quickly, follow district policies, and prioritize safety and equity. Clear expectations and support resources must be shared before the season, while strong relationships and regular climate assessments help maintain a respectful environment. Investigations should be thorough and well-documented. Build trust with constituents by using transparent communication, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive approaches.

We have developed 2 important tools to use in this phase of the process: [Scope of Incident Tool](#) and [Flowchart for Communication and Decision Making](#).

Responding to Bias Incidents in School Athletics & Activities



1. Respond Immediately and Seriously

- Treat all bias incidents with urgency and seriousness, following required timelines.
- Ensure immediate safety and support for those impacted.
- Activate response protocols as outlined in district policy.



2. Investigate and Document Thoroughly

- Follow district policies and any applicable laws to conduct fair and thorough investigations.
- Follow district and state policies and laws regarding any required reporting.
- Understand the full scope of the incident to support all impacted individuals.
- Establish a team with assigned roles for investigations.
- Document all actions taken and decisions made, including names, dates, and follow-up actions.
- Apply an equity lens to all decisions, prioritizing care and safety, and cross-cultural understanding.



3. Seek Support When Needed

- Involve district personnel or legal counsel as required by policy or law.
- Ensure investigators are trained and supported throughout the process.
- Use trauma-informed approaches when interviewing potential victims.
- Conduct interviews in the preferred language of the person being interviewed, using a professional interpreter as needed.
- Use culturally responsive practices, recognizing how the home cultures of individuals may impact the ways they respond to stressful or traumatic events.



4. Communicate Transparently and Responsibly

- Follow district guidelines for communicating about investigations, including timelines and feedback loops.
- Use clear, accessible language to explain what can legally be shared.
- Communication plans are proportionate to the scale of the incident.
- Provide timely updates to all relevant groups.
- Demonstrate accountability through frequent and accurate communication.

Restore: The foundation for individual and community healing

Establish communication plans, evaluation, processes, and ongoing support

After a bias incident, schools should focus on restoring relationships and rebuilding community through clear communication, thoughtful evaluation, and sustained support. First, follow district policies and communicate transparently with all stakeholders using accessible language, ensuring legal and privacy guidelines are met. Then, evaluate the response using an equity-focused protocol to reflect on what worked and what needs improvement. Finally, plan ongoing communication and support by using equity tools to guide decisions, clearly outlining responsibilities, timelines, and restorative actions to ensure long-term healing and accountability.

Restoring a Community After a Bias Incident in School Athletics and Activities



1. Communicate with impacted constituents in a transparent, timely, and accessible manner.

- Follow district policy regarding communication of the investigation and findings.
- Designate a spokesperson or communication lead for consistency as needed.
- Identify what information is legally shareable and ensure compliance with privacy laws.
- Use clear, accessible, and inclusive language in all communications.
- Communicate with each constituent group (students, staff, families, community partners).
- Provide frequent updates to demonstrate the seriousness of the response.
- Offer translation or interpretation services as needed.



2. Evaluate the incident response using an equity-focused lens to improve future practices.

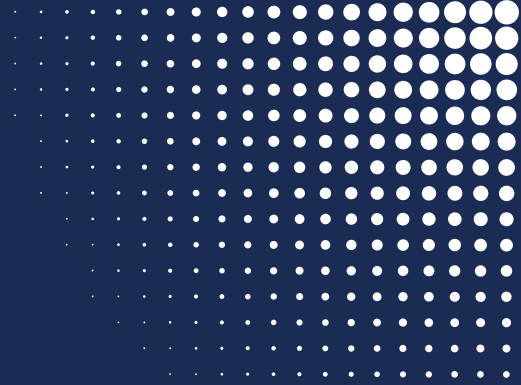
- Use an equity-focused after-incident protocol to guide evaluation.
- Gather feedback from impacted groups (surveys, listening sessions, etc.).
- Assess whether the needs of all constituents were met.
- Identify strengths and gaps in the response process.
- Document lessons learned and areas for improvement.
- Share a summary of findings with stakeholders, as appropriate.



3. Plan ongoing communication and support to sustain healing and accountability.

- Use an equity decision-making tool or lens to guide the next steps.
- Clearly communicate future or ongoing decisions and actions to all constituent groups.
- Include timelines for the implementation of restorative actions.
- Identify and communicate who is responsible for:
 - Ongoing support for impacted students and staff
 - Implementation of restorative activities
 - Long-term communication and updates
- Plan and schedule follow-up meetings or check-ins with impacted constituents as needed.
- Provide access to counseling, affinity spaces, or restorative circles as optional supports for impacted students.
- Monitor the progress of support plans and any changes to practices and adjust these plans as needed.

Resources



Prevent

[ODE Every Student Belongs Guidance](#)

[OSAA Discriminatory Harassment Complaint Form](#)

[OSAA Support and Equity Resources](#)

[OSAA Complaint Process Guide](#)

[STAR Public Address Script - Students](#)

[Let's Talk! Discussing Race, Racism, and Other Difficult Topics with Students, Learning for Justice](#)

[Speak Up at School, a Student's Guide, Learning for Justice](#)

Know your district's policies:

- ACB - Every Student Belongs
- Equity
- Anti-Discrimination and Harassment
- Equal Opportunity in Education
- KL - Complaint Process
- Title IX



Respond

[Scope of Incident Tool](#)

[Flowchart for Communication and Decision Making](#)

[ODE Toolkit: Communicating about Racial Equity in a Charged Environment](#)

[Investigation and Documentation Tool](#)

[Trauma Informed Approach to Interviewing Victims](#)

[Communications Resources \(includes sample emails\)](#)

[Immediate Incident Response Protocols](#)



Restore

[After Incident Response Evaluation Tool](#)

[Using Student Voice in Decision-Making](#)



Best Practices Resources

[Bias Incident Response Roadmap - WLWV](#)

[#NotAtMySchool, Eliminating Hateful Language in Hillsboro School District](#)

Not Here, Not Now - David Douglas School District: [Video](#) | [Guide](#)